

## **Economic Development Advisory Council**

### **7.01.10 Meeting minutes**

#### **Americana Room – Hampshire Hills**

##### **Present:**

Tracy Bardsley, Do-it  
Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co  
George Infanti, Milford Paint  
Heather Leach, Centrix Bank  
John McCormack, TIFD  
Tom Sapienza, Hampshire Hills Sports Club  
Penny Seaver, Smith, Seaver & Bean  
Sean Trombly, Trombly Farms  
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc

Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission  
Rosie Deloge, Milford School District  
Bill Parker, Director Community Development  
Janet Langdell, Planning Board representative

##### **Also present:**

Michelle Sampson, Wadleigh Memorial Library

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T. Sapienza called the meeting to order at 7:35AM.

##### **Minutes:**

T. Bardsley made a motion to accept the 4/21/10 minutes as written. C. Costantino seconded, and all in favor with G. Infanti abstaining.

#### **Recap of EDAC Board of Selectmen presentation on June 14, 2010**

T. Sapienza said that the presentation by the subcommittee chairs was very well received. The board was impressed with the depth and accomplishments of this group. We received encouragement to continue and were given a new charge for the website subcommittee to move forward with establishing a branding committee.

#### **Subcommittee Reports**

##### **Policies and Procedures – status of work and next steps:**

J. McCormack agreed that the session with the Selectmen was good; they were attentive and interested. Their questions were related mainly to the priorities of each subcommittee and whether there were any conflicts with what we should be doing as a group. It presented a good opportunity for us to stress that the efforts of the three subcommittees were mutually supportive and very much integrated into the total effort. For example, policies and procedures can be better communicated and understood with a more effective website. It would be better if we were challenged more with more specific questions or asked what support is needed for economic development, so this served as a reminder that we may need to be more proactive. The EDAC is gradually producing ideas and with Guy's support maybe the Selectmen can look ahead to develop objectives and set some milestones for measurement. The policies and procedures report was also well received and can serve as a useful guide to move forward.

##### **Our next steps:**

- Follow up meeting with Guy to discuss the recommendations and how to bring them forward,
- Schedule a review session with each of the original departments,
- Continue to re-establish communication and re-integrate various town department activities and plans with the Water and Sewer Commission. Make sure the ten-year facilities plan is well understood and take a more proactive approach as far as development opportunities within the town by picking an area that presented

good opportunity for development. The land use report may also aid in the communication with water and sewer.

Overall the meeting was successful and our next step is to meet with Guy and see where we go from here and push the ideas up the line.

J. Langdell said she watched the presentation on public access TV and the subcommittees did a nice job. She brought up a potential bottleneck with the Selectmen as they struggle with ordinances that may have impact on businesses in town such as the taxicab ordinance and hawkers & peddlers licensing. She also noted that businesses weren't the only ones affected; there may be some bottlenecks for non-profit entities trying to get through all the permitting and policy issues outside of Water and Sewer or Community Development referencing the Special Events process. J. McCormack reiterated that time is money and better service to customers has to apply across the board; part of the challenge is to communicate ahead of the efforts and the communication needs to go both ways. B. Parker noted that individual departments aren't always included in the ordinance process, where the Selectmen grant permissions directly and two examples that affect local businesses are the taxi cab ordinance and the towing policy. J. Langdell inquired if the Selectmen ask how businesses will be affected as part of their process and said the internal communications policy needs streamlining. M. Sampson gave an example of the library hearing about specific training from the Boys & Girls club instead of through interdepartmental communication. D. White said he felt that there are too many ordinances, rules and regulations in town. J. Langdell explained that she is running the Rotary Swim Meet this year and it would have been a big help if somebody would have had a flow sheet with all the steps showing this is what you do, even though she knows her way around the departments. Nicole Banks, the head of Recreation was very important in the event process and things would be very different for an outsider to try to do an event in Milford. A lengthy discussion on the special events process followed; citing several examples:

- A person involved with the circus carnival said the regulations had changed from the way things were done in the past and the company who puts on the carnival commented that they had not seen a community with so many rules and regulations as Milford has, even in cities bigger than Milford.
- The Rotary's pancake breakfast used to be held in the County Stores parking lot for many years, but last year was moved because they had to show a site plan and keep the flaps open as exits on the fireproof tents.
- A comment was made at a graduation party where a 20x12 tent was used asking if the owner had obtained a permit.
- To have a function at the school, even one chair over 250 requires special measures; egress announcements have to be made, the chairs are banded together in specific quantities and there has to be crowd control. The Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation had standing room only without any of the above steps required. Are there two different standards?
- A private party for 350 people was held on private property and supposedly the Fire Department wanted a piece of the tent to do a flame retardant test on. Why is it the responsibility of the local fire department to have oversight of the event?

J. McCormack suggested meeting with Guy to discuss the examples to better understand the process. B. Parker said there are many sides to these stories, but it is very important to understand how or what was communicated and what was not communicated and what was or wasn't followed. Guy has been discussing the hawkers and peddlers license with him and Guy is looking at other towns with much less a bureaucratic process than we do, so he would be open to this right now. We need to work on the perception.

G. Infanti said that Amherst recently had a carnival and the process was simple. They went before the Planning Board with a hand drawn site plan showing all the required details and it was approved in one night.

T. Bardsley explained that there was a meeting when the Special Events policy came out and representatives from the Recreation Department, Community Development, Hampshire Hills, the Rotary, and Do-it were all invited. A draft of the policy was issued and it was pretty much just adopted because it was all based on the fire code, so it is what it is. T. Bardsley added that not all towns have adopted the state fire code. The policy has been in place over a year now but it may not have been well communicated to other groups past that original draft meeting group. R. Deloge said the school district, one of the larger employers in town, had to scurry at the last minute to

comply for a Future Business Leaders event. T. Bardsley also noted that costs have gone up significantly and gave details. We should not forget that all these events bring significant revenue into the Town.

D. White said someone told this week that if it weren't for the school system, they would not build in Milford. The side of the story he got was that the process stopped while someone was on vacation. That shouldn't happen in these economic times. J. McCormack said we should look at other towns who adopted the fire codes to see where the process is working to find out if there is a way to temper some of the issues and better communicate. D. White acknowledged that the same issues are everywhere, but not to the degree as in Milford and asked what Amherst does. G. Infanti said he hears the same thing in Amherst, that there's not a lot of flexibility when it comes to fire. There are options and it is up to the Fire Chief as to what parts of the code he can waive. M. Ciardelli agreed that we should explore other towns and noted that if you build in Hollis, sprinklers are mandatory and other towns have more restrictions than Milford for gas piping and propane tank permitting. We could inquire if there are any areas logically that could be made a little easier for businesses. J. McCormack said that he had a generator installed last year and his installer obtained permits for the electrical and gas hook up and said that Milford was very good in terms of being responsive and was open to explaining the requirements compared to other towns he has worked in both New Hampshire and Massachusetts. J. McCormack then suggested we make the first effort and meet with the Fire Chief. B. Parker said it would be important to include Guy in any meetings. J. Langdell added that it's not just businesses, private property owners are affected as well. We need to find a balance point. D. White agreed that we need to find a middle of the road that people can afford. J. Langdell referenced the swim meet when the Police Chief suggested hiring a certified private party for the traffic details at a more affordable rate than actual police details; \$17 vs. \$46 per hour. T. Sapienza noted that the costs are hitting the Hampshire Dome harder and in turn they pass the costs for dome events to the customers and sometimes have to cut the rental fee.

R. Deloge said, in terms of policies at the Selectmen's level, the questions they need to now incorporate into their deliberations are "who and how will this impact and once approved, how do we communicate and implement and with whom?"

### **Website Development – results of presentation to the Board of Selectmen:**

T. Bardsley reported that the website sub committee has completed our task. Mike McInerney the new director of Community Media has actually been working on the new town website and Bill and I got a preview recently. A contractor has been hired to do the job and is very responsive to integrating our suggestions and changes. It will look so much nicer than what we have now. B. Parker said it looks better than some of the better sites we've been looking at. Mike is looking at releasing the preliminary stage mid to late August to and we could probably schedule a preview for this group. J. Langdell inquired about the overall consistency; would all the departments have the same look and feel so that the user knows they are still on the Milford website. T. Bardsley said Mike is working on that. The town departments will be for the most part and the separate departments that have their own pages such as the library, police, fire, ambulance and conservation will be linked similarly. J. Langdell asked if those departments will be incorporated into the whole package, especially as we get into branding. T. Bardsley said that is a slower process than just doing the town website and when we start working on the branding initiative, it can be addressed further. Another aspect of the website subcommittee's report involved a communication policy. Guy and the BOS have been working on that since the meeting; however, it seems that no other town in the state has a communication policy. Keene has a brand new social media policy, but with no examples out there, they are struggling with how to craft one. M. Sampson said that Guy had contacted her to do some research on internal communications, in terms of committees and agendas but also discussed the broader sense of putting a social media policy under the communications umbrella. J. Langdell asked someone to define the term communications policy. T. Bardsley said there are many people communicating on behalf of the town, from departments and committees, to the social media of Facebook, Constant Contact and twitter, yet there is no general oversight or checklist and this is new territory. H. Leach inquired if this would be the type of thing that a group of graduate students from Keene State or Whittemore School of Business could work on. They would have a better feel for the social media. J. McCormack brought up corporate policy which has been in existence for some time that would provide good examples. B. Parker ended a brief discussion by suggesting that the website subcommittee could come up with an outline of our thoughts on what a communications policy should cover. J. Langdell said that including a definition with the outline would give the BOS a starting point for the bigger picture. Further discussion ensued.

T. Bardsley said that the BOS gave the subcommittee the go ahead for a branding initiative which will look at creating new marketing tools; a new look and slogan for the town. We have met and somewhat discussed the goals and objectives which are fairly broad right now. The basics would be the logo, the slogan, color pallet and font so that any group that has Milford in their name will buy into and perhaps use in some form. We're hoping that they will be part of the process because the more people who use it, the more recognizable it becomes. J. McCormack said encouraging hits to the website means that from an economic development point of view, you will be included in an early screening. T. Bardsley said we need to create more of a presence for economic development. The second part of the goal would be the strategy for development and implementation of this tool. We would then come back to this committee for input on determining more specific goals. P. Seaver suggested calling in students from Keene State, Nashua Community College or Rivier College to assist or work with us on the marketing piece. M. Sampson said her former library in Massachusetts used the business school at Babson College to come up with a marketing plan. The class/group project was a huge undertaking but provided very good results. She tried the same thing here when the Library trustees requested a marketing plan here and used two groups from Rivier College; one MBA class and one undergraduate class. It was a very different experience and although we got good kernels of information and new insights, there was no follow through as a marketing plan. She would recommend using a graduate level group.

### **Land Use - status of work and next steps**

H. Leach said the committee presented an in depth inventory to the Planning Board last Tuesday. We went site by site showing the existing lands uses and what is underutilized. We then overlaid the zoning districts and physical constraints to come up with good detail. As a result, the Planning Board would like us to look at what is allowed in the current zoning district grid to see if it makes sense from an economic development standpoint. They also want us to focus on the zoning and land use on Elm St as a longer term project. J. Langdell added that they would look at design guidelines and what tools need to be in place in order to promote, develop and move forward with how we want the west side of Milford to look. H. Leach described some of the areas and said everyone was very surprised to see where some of the pockets of opportunity were. J. Langdell said we are also fortunate that the NRPC has a fast track program and they will be able to help with this. H. Leach said this area is a gateway and we should determine reasonable guidelines for what we want that land to look like before developers come in. There was a brief discussion on potential development in that area which would dovetail.

D. White said it was mentioned that the Water and Sewer commissioners should be more proactive in the ten year build-out. In terms of economic development, there needs to be more communication between DPW, Water and Sewer, and Planning. You can't do the upgrades for water and sewer without taking care of the roads. They are tied together and it's more efficient to address all the issues at the same time. We can't beautify without fixing what's underneath. We do need to be proactive, but Guy should get involved to coordinate all parties. H. Leach said that one of the overlays of the inventory looked at where water and sewer was and along Elm St there are a couple of pockets where the sewer does skip. J. McCormack said he has tremendous respect for Bob Courage and he has so much knowledge. J. Langdell said the Planning Board is in the process of working on housing and transportation right now, but there is always an open door for the commissioners to come in to discuss future needs and what the town should be doing to be proactive and ready to go. D. White suggested making a call to say the Planning Board would like to meet and we will be there.

H. Leach asked if it would be beneficial for the land use committee to sit down with the various departments to get their input on the Elm St corridor; where they see the opportunities and what their concerns are. B. Parker agreed that is what should be done. D. White said the zoning will determine what can go there and then sewer and water can determine what will be needed because the infrastructure should be designed for the potential use and the costs incorporated into the build-out. J. Langdell said the process includes questions like: what do we have for infrastructure now, what will it support, what do we think the area will be more suited for and what infrastructure is needed to support that. D. White said water and sewer can go anywhere, but the key is how will it be funded. Where is the middle ground between the town's responsibility to use tax dollars and the developer's money to create and build new infrastructure. H. Leach added that the presentation to the Planning Board was very lengthy and contained a lot of information, so after the Board has time to think about everything, there may be some additional input coming.

**Membership:**

H. Leach inquired when the one year terms would be up. B. Parker thought August or September and he will send an email to those individuals asking if they will re-up.

**Resignation of Richard Ball & recognition**

T. Sapienza said the committee has received the resignation of Rich Ball and he would like to personally thank Rich for his insight and tremendous contributions. He brought a unique perspective and always made us think. We will do a certificate to show appreciation for his service.

**Discussion on recommendation of replacement**

T. Sapienza said Rich's resignation of course opens up a spot on the committee. We do have one formal request from someone involved with the school system which is already represented. D. White said while diversity is important; the individual should be pro-economic development. B. Parker added that the individual would need to have time to work at the tasks. After a brief discussion, the consensus was that there should be a representative from local industry, possibly from one of the manufacturing facilities; Hitchiner, Hendrix, Airmar, Aegis.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**New development in town**

B. Parker said the 25+ acres Cutts property for sale on South St has been generating a lot of interest. There is a potential national drug store looking at locations in town. The former McDonalds on Elm St is being renovated into a "fifties" diner but the downside is that the district court may be moving out of the property next door and will take a lot of the traffic away.

**Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held in September.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05AM.